



September 25, 2008

The Honorable Fortney ‘Pete’ Stark  
Chair  
Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health  
1135 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Stark:

The American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA) supports your initiative to increase transparency and accountability for the quality of care provided in our nation’s nursing homes and to improve facilities’ corporate compliance. Transparency and accountability are essential for public trust and confidence in nursing homes as a place where frail elders can receive the care and services they need.

AAHSA is the national association of not-for-profit organizations dedicated to providing high-quality health care, housing, and home and community-based services primarily to the elderly. AAHSA’s mission is to represent the interests of its members by promoting the association’s vision of an integrated continuum of high-quality services through ethical leadership, advocacy, education, information and other services.

We appreciate your leadership on issues of concern to our members and the seniors we serve, and applaud your commitment to improving the quality of care provided in nursing homes. The Nursing Home Transparency and Quality of Care Improvement Act will increase transparency and promote accountability by requiring all nursing homes to disclose their ownership. In addition, the bill corrects a long-standing omission on Medicare cost reports by requiring information on dollars spent for nursing – nursing costs are a critical element in assessing quality. Recognizing that consumers need adequate and more easily accessible information, the bill also improves the information available to consumers on Nursing Home Compare, and directs that improvements be made to make the site more user-friendly for the public.

However, we oppose any increase in penalties for deficiencies cited on nursing home inspections. Extensive remedies already exist to address inadequate performance by nursing homes, through fines, denial of payment for new admissions, exclusion from Medicare, and imposition of temporary management. Based on our work on the Advancing Excellence Campaign, we believe education, training, support and positive reinforcement of nursing homes that engage in continual quality improvement are the building blocks for improving quality in our nursing homes, protecting residents, and leading to the time when there will be only two types of nursing homes – the excellent and the non-existent.

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging

2519 Connecticut Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20008-1520 | [aahsa.org](http://aahsa.org) | 202.783.2242

We thank you for your leadership and appreciate the opportunity to continue working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William L. Minnix, Jr." in a cursive script.

William L. Minnix, Jr.  
President and CEO